

THE CHRISTIAN HISTORY;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival
of Religion in Great Britain, America, &c.

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Extract from the Rev. Mr. Wilson finished.

THEY best relish such a kind of outside, heartless Devotion, as may stand with the quiet Enjoyment of their Lusts, and not disturb their dead and sleepy Consciences: And therefore the less Life and Vigour there is in those Exercises of Religion, wherein they think good to bear a Part, the more pleasing they are to them: they dread all other as much as a Child doth the sound of a Trumpet, or the terrible crack of Thunder, as that which amazes and affrights them, and breaks them of their beloved Ease. Who is there that looks abroad in the World, and sees not this? And therefore whenever any have harden'd themselves into the Confidence of casting Reproaches upon such as are observed to be most hearty and fervent in the Worship of God, they usually have the *Vogue of the profane Multitude* to side with them; and are by that Advantage embolden'd more freely to pour out their Venom, tho' sometimes they run so far beyond all Bounds of Candour, Modesty and Truth, that they give the deepest Wounds to their own Reputation in the Esteem of those who are sober and ingenuous.

3. Did the Persons thus accused take to themselves the Honour of what Good they have or do; or did they endeavour to attempt to gain or exercise any Dominion over the Faith or Consciences of their Brethren, there might be some better Colour for this Imputation. But it is evident to all, that they disown all such self-admiring and self-exalting Concits, making themselves Servants to all, in order to the Furtherance of their Master's Honour, to whom they desire to sacrifice all they have, not seeking their own Exonement

or Advancement, but the Profit of many, that they may be saved.

But it's usual with those, whose worldly Interest is their *Summa Ratio*, to measure others by themselves, and to lay that at the Doors of those whom they distaste, which they are conscious of in their own Hearts, and which every one can discern to be too conspicuous in their Lives. I shall conclude this with the Words of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 4. 5. *Judge nothing before the Time, till the Lord come, who both will bring to Light the hidden Things of Darkness, and will make manifest the Counsels of the Hearts, and then shall every Man have praise of God.*

To the preceeding Essay, in Vindication of a regular Zeal, we shall add, The Advice of the judicious Mr. DAVID DICKSON (Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh) to those that have permitted their Zeal to transgress its proper Bounds: It is extracted from the Therapeutica Sacra, printed 1656.

IT is no uncommon Thing for those that love God in Sincerity, thro' an Impatience with the bold Impieties of wicked Men, to transgress the Limits of a *regular Zeal*. And when this Impatience betrays them into Mistakes, for which they meet with too severe Treatment either from their Friends or from Men in Power; instead of correcting only the irregular Sallies of their Zeal, they are apt to suppress the most regular and laudable Expressions of it, and become lukewarm and indifferent: Mistrusting, that their Zeal was nothing better than what rigidity, or rashness, or carnal Hatred, or some such evil Temper might occasion. Add to this, a consciousness of that Corruption and Infirmitie, which cleaves to the humane Nature in its present State; and the Temptations of the common Enemy of Souls, who is ever active to extinguish the truest and most commendable religious Fervours.

Here therefore is the Danger---lest these commendable Fervours should be suffered to languish: Left in such a Circumstance a Man should be tempted to slacken the Reins of his Activity in the *regular Pursuits of Goodness*. And so, by suffering his Zeal for God to abate in Vigour, be deserted of him;

him ; and fall into a lukewarm Temper, which is most offensive and hateful to him.

And further, in such a State and Frame it is highly probable he will grow more and more easy, and indeed be more and more confirm'd, in Proportion as he observes the Sentiments of his Friends and the World concerning his Prudence alter in his Favour.

Now to remedy this Mischief : I think it can admit of no just Dispute, whether the same may not happen to a true Zeal, which is incident to all other Virtues here : where none are so perfectly posseſ'd by any Man as to be free from ſome Deficiency or Excess. And as it would be unreasonable for any to leave the Paths and Pursuits of Virtue, discouraged by their Infirmities and Imperfections ; so it would be equally absurd, to take Occasion from the irregular Motions of Zeal, to become indifferent and lukewarm : and the more ſo, ſince ſuch an Action in the Eyes and Esteem of Christ, as he himſelf has declared, would appear no better than a leaving our first Love to him ; and for which he has threatned to ſpue us out of his Mouth.

Wherefore, if any be in ſuch a Circumſtance, it is their Duty to examine themſelves, and compare their Actions to the Rules of the Scripture, that they may know exactly how far they are conformable to that divine Standard. They ſhould also diſtinguiſh between the Matter of an Action and the Manner of it. For there may be ſome Imprudence in the Manner of doing an Action of a moſt laudable Kind. They ſhould conſider whether any thing unbecoming has attended either their Words or their Behaviour, from whence a Suspicion, that their Zeal was carnal, might poſſibly arife ; and if upon Search any Thing can be diſcovered, they ſhould candidly confeſs it both to God and to Man, as far as may ſerve any uſeful Purpose ; and defend at the ſame Time the good Action, tho' not ſo well done as it ſhould have been ; and take Comfort in God, and conſirm themſelves in their Reſolutions and Endeavours to please him ; and not condemn the goodness of the Action with the imperfect Manner of it.

And further, it is their Duty to conduct themſelves with greater Caution and Circumspection for the future ; and in ſuch a Manner moderate and govern the Expressions of the Zeal burning in them, as to utter every Thing, which it may prompt them to, with the utmoſt Mildneſs and Gentleness.

For this Purpose they should cherish with the greatest Care those inseperable Companions of a true Zeal --- a Fear and Reverence of the supreme Being, a hearty Love to all about them, and an unaffected Humility. For the *Fear of God* will restrain them from departing from his Laws : *Humility* will render them modest in their Behaviour ; and the *Love they bear to their Neighbour* will make them mild and sweet in the Exercise of their Duty to him. This is a Temperature of Zeal which God requires : This is a Zeal with Wisdom.

At the repeated Desire of several Subscribers to this Paper we shall now insert, The Confession and Retractions of the Rev. Mr. DAVENPORT late of Long-Island with the Rev. Mr. WILLIAMS's Letter inclosing them, viz.

To the Reverend Mr. Prince of Boston.

Reverend Sir,

THE enclos'd which comes open, you will see is a CONFESSION and RETRACTION, of the Rev. Mr. JAMES DAVENPORT ; which he left with me Yesterday, and desir'd me to inclose in a Letter to you : praying that you would see that it is according to his Desire forthwith publish'd, and made known in the most open Manner. He desir'd me to assure you that the whole of the Paper, and every Interline, was made and written with his own Hand. And he is full, and free in it, and seems to be deeply sensible of his Miscarriages, and Misconduct in those Particulars, and very desirous to do all he possibly can to retrieve the Dishonour which he has done to Religion, and the Injustice to many Ministers of the Gospel ; and in this as well as any other Way to promote the Service of Religion, and prevent any further Prejudices against the Work of God which he may have been the Occasion of raising or increasing. I must needs say for my own Part I desire to bless God for that humble, and Christian-like Temper he appears to be in ; and can't but hope that God designs to use him as an Instrument of greater Service to the Honour of Christ, and the good of his Church.

I am, Sir, with great Respect your unworthy Brother,
and humble Servant,

SOLOMON WILLIAMS.

Lebanon, August 2d. 1744.

The

The Rev. Mr. DAVENPORT'S Retractions &c.

ALTHO' I don't question at all, but there is great Reason to bless God for a glorious and wonderful Work of his Power and Grace in the Edification of his Children, and the Conviction and Conversion of Numbers in New-England, in the neighbouring Governments & several other Parts, within a few Years past ; and believe that the Lord hath favoured me, tho' most unworthy, with several others of his Servants, in granting special Assistance and Success ; the Glory of all which be given to JEHOVAH, to whom alone it belongs :

Yet after frequent Meditation and Desires that I might be enabled to apprehend Things justly, and, I hope I may say, mature Consideration ; I am now fully convinced and perswaded that *several Appendages to this glorioue Work are no* essential Parts thereof, but of a different and contrary Nature and Tendency ; which Appendages I have been in the Time of the Work very industrious in and instrumental of promoting, by a misguided Zeal : being further much influenced in the Affair by the *false Spirit* ; which, unobserved by me, did (as I have been brought to see since) prompt me to *unjust Apprehensions and Misconduct in several Articles* ; which have been great Blemishes to the Work of God, very grievous to some of God's Children, no less insnaring and corrupting to others of them, a sad Means of many Persons questioning the Work of God, concluding and appearing against it, and of the hardening of Multitudes in their Sins, and an awful Occasion of the Enemies blaspheming the right Ways of the Lord ; and withal very offensive to that God, before whom I would lie in the Dust, prostrate in deep Humility and Repentance on this Account, imploring Pardon for the Mediator's Sake, and thankfully accepting the Tokens thereof.

The Articles, which I especially refer to, and would in the most public Manner retract, and warn others against, are these which follow, viz.

I. The Method I us'd for a considerable Time, with Respect to some, yea many Ministers in several Parts, in openly exposing such as I fear'd or thought unconverted, in publick Prayer or otherwise : herein making my private Judgment, (in which also I much suspect I was mistaken in several Instances, and I believe also that my Judgment concerning several, was formed rashly and upon very slender Grounds.) I say, making my private

private Judgment, the Ground of publick Actions or Conduct; offending, as I apprehend (altho' in the Time of it ignorantly) against the *ninth Commandment*, and such other Passages of Scripture, as are similar; yea, I may say, offending against the Laws both of Justice and Charity: Which Laws were further broken,

II. By my *advising and urging to such Separations from those Ministers*, whom I treated as above, as I believe may be justly called rash, unwarrantable, and of sad and awful Tendency and Consequence. And here I would ask the Forgiveness of those Ministers, whom I have injured in both these Articles.

III. I confess I have been much led astray by *following Impulses or Impressions* as a Rule of Conduct, whether they came with or without a Text of Scripture; and my neglecting also duly to observe the Analogy of Scripture: I am perswaded this was a great Means of corrupting my Experiences and carrying me off from the Word of God, and a great Handle, which the *false Spirit* has made use of with Respect to a Number, and me especially.

IV. I believe further that I have done much Hurt to Religion by *encouraging private Persons to a ministerial and authoritative Kind or Method of exhorting*; which is particularly observable in many such being much puffed up and *falling into the Snare of the Devil*, whilst many others are thus directly prejudic'd against the Work.

V. I have Reason to be deeply humbled that I have not been duly careful to endeavour to remove or prevent Prejudice, (where I now believe I might then have done it consistently with Duty) which appear'd remarkable in the Method I practis'd, of *singing with others in the Streets in Societies* frequently.

I would also penitently confess and bewail my *great Stiffness* in retaining these *aforesaid Errors* a great while, and unwillingness to examine into them with any Jealousy of their being Errors, notwithstanding the friendly Counsels and Cautions of real Friends, especially in the Ministry.

Here may properly be added a Paragraph or two, taken out of a *Letter from me to Mr. Barber at Georgia*; a true Copy of which I gave Consent should be publish'd lately at Philadelphia: "---- I would add to what Brother T---- hath written on the awful Affair of Books and Cloaths at New-London, which affords Grounds of deep and lasting Humiliation;

" miliation ; I was to my Shame be it spoken, the Ring-leader in that horrid Action ; I was, my dear Brother, under the powerful Influence of the *false Spirit* almost one whole Day together, and Part of several Days. The Lord shewed me afterwards that the Spirit I was then acted by was in it's Operations void of true inward Peace, laying the greatest Stress on Externals, neglecting the Heart, full of Impatience, Pride and Arrogance ; altho' I thought in the Time of it, that 'twas the Spirit of God in an high Degree ; awful indeed ! my Body especially my Leg much disorder'd at the same Time, || which Satan and my evil Heart might make some Handle of.---

And now may the holy wife and good God, be pleas'd to guard and secure me against such *Errors* for the future, and stop the Progress of those, whether Ministers or People, who have been corrupted by my Words or Example in any of the above-mention'd Particulars ; and if it be his holy Will, bless this publick Recantation to this Purpose. And Oh ! may he grant withal, that such as by Reason of the aforesaid *Errors and Misconduct* have entertained unhappy Prejudices against Christianity in general, or the late glorious Work of God in particular, may by this Account learn to distinguish the *Appendage* from the *Substance* or *Essence*, that which is *vile* and *odious* from that which is *precious*, *glorious* and *divine*, and thus be intirely and happily freed from all those Prejudices refer'd to, and this in infinite Mercy through Jesus Christ : and to these Requests may all God's Children, whether Ministers or others say, Amen.

July 28. 1744.

James Davenport.

P. S. In as much as a Number, who have fallen in with and promoted the aforesaid *Errors* and *Misconduct*, and are not alter'd in their Minds, may be prejudic'd against this *Recantation*, by a Supposition or Belief, that I came into it by Reason of Desertion or Dulness and Dead-

|| I had the long Fever on me and the cankry Humour raging at once.

ness in Religion : It seems needful therefore to signify, what I hope I may say without boasting, and what I am able thro' pure rich Grace to speak with Truth and Freedom ; that for some Months in the Time of my coming to the *abovesaid Conclusions and Retractions*, and since I have come through Grace to them ; I have been favoured a great Part of the Time, with a sweet *Calm and Serenity of Soul and Rest in God*, and sometimes with special and remarkable Refreshments of Soul, and these more free from corrupt Mixtures than formerly : *Glory to God alone.*

J. D.

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